



**Office of School Improvement**  
**Priority Schools Manual**  
**2013-2014**

DRAFT September 1, 2013

## **Purpose of the Manual**

This manual offers information and strategies for division and school leaders, lead turnaround partners (LTP) and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)-assigned contractors working with division- and school-level improvement teams associated with priority schools. Ideas presented in the manual are intended to provide the necessary information and outline division, school, LTP, and VDOE-assigned contractor responsibilities for supporting priority schools in their efforts to implement and sustain continuous improvement.

In addition to general guidance, the manual offers examples and recommendations for using the online Indistar® tool created by the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) to structure its work with priority schools. This tool will be used by both division- and school-level teams as a component of the process to plan and carry out strategies leading to the improvement of student achievement.

This manual, along with additional resources for priority schools, is located on the VDOE Office of School Improvement Priority School Web page at:

[http://doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

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**Section 1:**

**Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965**

**(ESEA)**

**Flexibility Waiver Information**

## ***Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver Information***

### **Background**

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) offered each state educational agency (SEA) the opportunity to request flexibility on behalf of the state educational agency (SEA), its local educational agencies (LEAs), and its schools, in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. This voluntary opportunity provides participating SEAs and LEAs with flexibility regarding specific requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. This flexibility is intended to build on and support the significant state and local reform efforts already underway in critical areas such as transitioning to college- and career-ready standards and assessments; developing systems of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; and evaluating and supporting teacher and principal effectiveness.

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver is intended to waive, with certain exceptions, any statutory or regulatory requirement of the ESEA for an SEA that receives funds under a program authorized by the ESEA. Under this flexibility, the USED has granted a waiver to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) through the 2013-2014 school year, after which time an extension of this flexibility may be requested.

For accountability purposes, priority schools will be identified based on the following criteria:

<b>Criterion A</b>	Schools receiving School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds under Section 1003(g) of ESEA in Federal Fiscal Year 2009 (Cohort I) or 2010 (Cohort II) and identified and served as a Tier I or Tier II school
<b>Criterion B</b>	Title I high schools with a federal graduation indicator* of 60 percent or less for two or more of the most recent consecutive years
<b>Criterion C</b> <i>(see additional note below)</i>	Title I schools based on the “all students” performance in reading and/or mathematics performance on federal annual measurable objectives (AMOs)
<b>Criterion D</b>	Title I schools failing to meet the 95 percent participation rate in reading and/or mathematics for three consecutive years

\*The ESEA federal graduation indicator recognizes only Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas.

Based on 723 schools identified as Title I in school year 2011-2012, Virginia will identify a number of schools equal to five percent of the state’s Title I schools, or 36 schools (5 percent of 723 schools), as priority schools for school year 2012-2013.

Criterion C: This criterion will be applied as necessary to identify as priority schools a number of schools that comprise an amount equal to five percent of the state’s Title I schools.

## **Methodology for Identifying Priority Schools**

Based on 723 schools identified as Title I in school year 2011-2012, a number of schools equal to five percent of the state's Title I schools, or 36 schools (5 percent of 723 schools), will be identified as priority schools for school year 2012-2013. Criterion C will be applied as necessary to identify as priority schools a number of schools that comprise an amount equal to five percent of the state's Title I schools. Schools in this category will be rank-ordered based on the sum of the difference(s) between the performance of the "all students" group in reading and mathematics compared to the respective federal AMO proficiency targets. Those schools with the largest gaps in performance will be included in the priority school list, up to the number of schools needed to equal the five percent requirement. The methodology to determine the list of priority schools that do not meet the participation rate and have the largest proficiency gaps in the all student category for reading and mathematics is described below:

1. Identify the number of Title I schools in the state in 2011-2012.
2. Identify the number of schools that must be identified as priority schools (a number equal to five percent of Title I schools).
3. Identify the schools currently served as Cohort I and II, Tier I or Tier II SIG schools (Criterion A).
4. Identify the schools that are Title I-participating with a federal graduation indicator (FGI) of less than 60 percent over the past two consecutive years (Criterion B).
5. Identify the number of schools that are among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools based on the performance of all students in reading and/or mathematics on federal AMOs (Criterion C).
6. Identify the number of schools that are Title I schools failing to meet the 95 percent participation rate in reading and/or mathematics for three consecutive years (Criterion D).

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver is located at [http://doe.virginia.gov/federal\\_programs/esea/flexibility/index.shtml](http://doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/flexibility/index.shtml).

***Note: Once identified as a priority school, a school will be expected to implement a USED model, or all turnaround principles, and associated interventions for a minimum of three consecutive years with a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) regardless of whether the school is identified as a priority school in the second or third year of implementing intervention strategies. A state-approved contractor will be assigned to the division to support and monitor the fidelity of implementation of the chosen model.***

## **Exit Criteria**

Schools may exit priority status by meeting the federal AMO proficiency targets for "all students" (as specified in the final approval of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver) for two consecutive years (years 2 and 3).

## **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Priority School Requirements**

### **Priority School Requirements under ESEA**

Once identified, priority schools and their respective divisions will be required to select and implement a turnaround model to address the needs of all students. A school division with a school receiving SIG funds as a Tier I or II school currently implementing a transformation or restart model will be expected

to continue to implement the model according to the timeline indicated in its approved continuation application. School divisions with schools newly identified as priority schools will be required to hire a LTP to implement, at a minimum, all requirements of the USED turnaround principles. Virginia's LTP program, as indicated further in this section, is aligned to these principles.

**Turnaround Principles:** Meaningful interventions designed to improve the academic achievement of students in priority schools must be aligned with all of the following “turnaround principles” and selected with family and community input:

- providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;
- ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;
- redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state academic content standards;
- using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including providing time for collaboration on the use of data;
- establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs; and
- providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

The four USED models include:

- **Turnaround Model:** Replace the principal, screen existing school staff, and rehire no more than half the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.
- **Restart Model:** Convert a school or close it and re-open it as a charter school or under an education management organization.
- **School Closure:** Close the school and send the students to higher-achieving schools in the division.
- **Transformation Model:** Replace the principal and improve the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.

## **ESEA Flexibility Waiver Provisions Regarding Teacher and Principal Evaluation**

### **Teacher Evaluation**

The *Code of Virginia* requires that school boards' procedures for evaluating teachers address student academic progress. The *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* calls for each teacher to receive a summative evaluation rating, and that the rating be determined by weighting the first six standards equally at 10 percent each, and the seventh standard, student academic progress, 40 percent of the summative evaluation. The document, *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, and training materials are available at the link:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance\\_evaluation/teacher/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/teacher/index.shtml).

### **Principal Evaluation**

The Board of Education (BOE) adopted the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* at its February 23, 2012, meeting. The guidelines set forth seven performance standards and call for student academic progress to be a significant factor in the evaluation of all principals. School divisions must have aligned principal evaluation systems with the BOE- approved performance standards and evaluation criteria for principals by July 1, 2013. The document, *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals*, and sample materials are available at the link:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance\\_evaluation/principal/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/principal/index.shtml).





## **Section 2:**

# **The Virginia Turnaround Zone**

## Overview of the Virginia Model

Virginia's Turnaround Zone draws its conceptual framework from the work published in *The Turnaround Challenge* by Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, Inc. A full copy of the report is available from the following Web site:

[http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/51/file/1/pubs/2010/04/15/TheTurnaroundChallenge\\_MainReport.pdf](http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/51/file/1/pubs/2010/04/15/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf).

In Virginia's LTP strategy, turnaround is a collaborative effort with the state, division and LTP. The state is responsible for supporting the school division and LTP. At the state level, a differentiated system of support has been developed through collaboration among various offices within the VDOE and a multitude of educational partners. The state supports the reform by developing local capacity through the alignment of targeted differentiated supports. The LTP, under contract with the local school board, brings increased resources and support for deep, systemic instructional reform. Under the ultimate authority of the local school board, the LTP leads the reform effort within the turnaround zone and is given the ability to act and the authority to make decisions. The LTP supports reform within the division in four key areas: people, time, programs and money. A well-coordinated reform effort delivered with quality and accountability develops capacity in the division and school for sustained improvement.

Figure 1 illustrates the Virginia Model for LTPs:

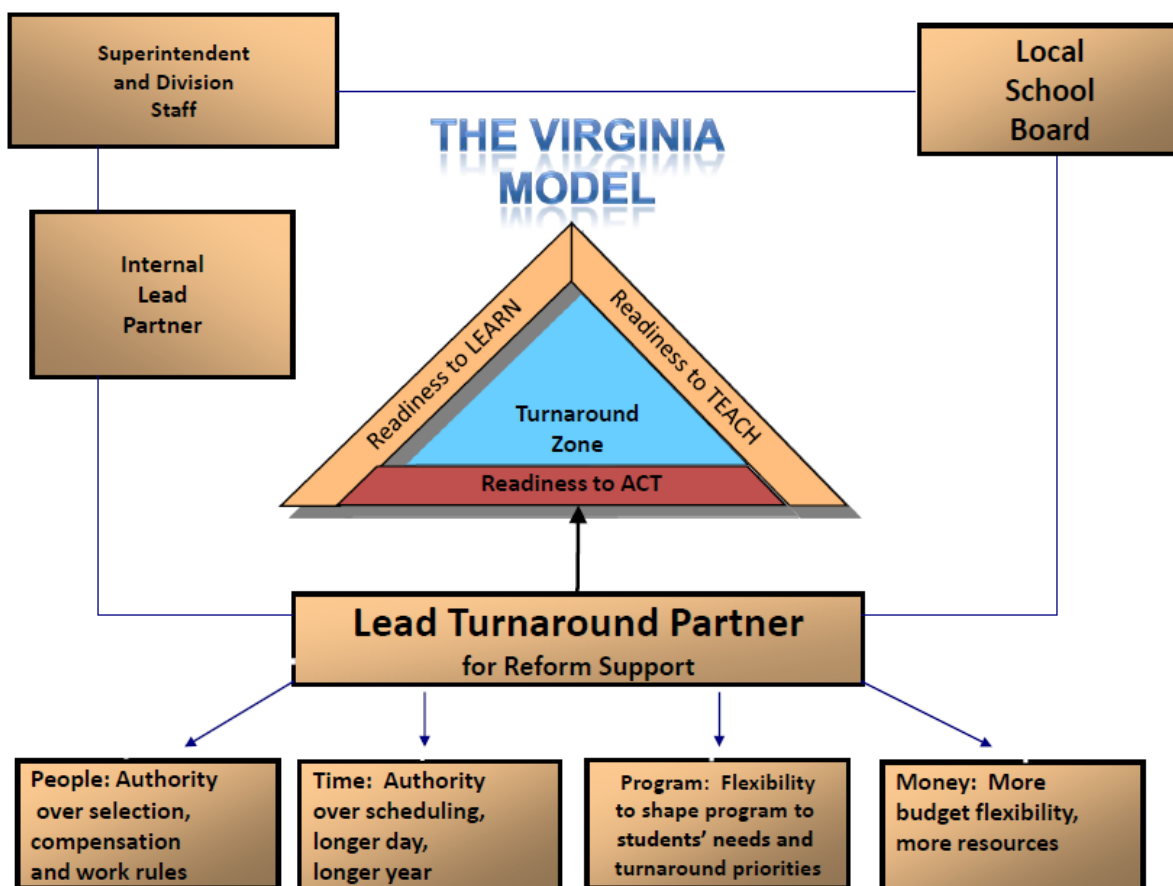


Figure 1



# **Section 3:**

## **Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) Selection and Application Process**

## Selecting a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP)

The school division and LTP must select to implement one of the four USED models, or at minimum, implement all requirements of the USED turnaround principles. A crosswalk showing the alignment of the MASS Insight model, the requirements of the USED turnaround principles, the requirements of the USED transformation model, and Virginia's scope of work awarded to vendors as part of the previous state contract is available at the following Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

Although the division may select its own LTP through its own procurement process, at a minimum, the process must include a rigorous review of the LTP's credentials, research-based strategies and proven track record of success. **It is important to note that VDOE will have an updated list of vendors resulting from a June 2013 RFP. The notice of newly awarded state contracts for vendors will be available at the link below in October 2013.**

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school\\_finance/procurement/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/procurement/index.shtml).

## Selecting a Model

### Selection Process and Timeline

A school division with a school *currently receiving SIG funds* as a Tier I or II school, and implementing a turnaround or transformation model, will be expected to continue to implement the model according to the timeline indicated in their approved application for SIG funding. School divisions with schools *newly identified* as priority schools will be required to implement, at a minimum, all requirements of the USED turnaround principles or one of the four USED models in its priority school(s). These school divisions will receive pre-implementation technical assistance from the state beginning in September 2013 to ensure the appropriate model is selected for the reform based on the school's most recent data. The data analysis process will be led by the OSI in accordance with the document written by the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) which is available at the following Web site:

<http://www.centerii.org/leamodel/>. School divisions are responsible for selecting the intervention model and external partners/providers that have the greatest potential to dramatically improve outcomes for students attending a low-achieving school. The CII's tool assists the school division in making the best decisions based on the data for each school. Divisions with newly identified priority schools will be required to hire an LTP no later than (Date - TBD) to assist with implementation, and they must fully implement the selected intervention strategies or USED model no later than (Date - TBD). In keeping with the established timeline for interventions in SIG schools, newly identified priority schools will be expected to implement the selected intervention strategies or USED model over a three-year period.

## **Restart Model**

Virginia **requires** schools that select the restart model to hire one of the approved vendors. Thus, the school must implement, at a minimum, all requirements included in the state contract. In addition, the school will be managed by an Education Management Operator (EMO) that has met a rigorous review process. Virginia requires substantial reform efforts by the LTP if the restart model is selected.

## **Application and Assurances**

Each newly identified priority school will receive a funding award to support the VDOE-assigned contractor's scope of work for assisting the school and division in the initial stages of the turnaround process as well as other startup costs. (Process and timeline - TBD) Once an LTP is selected, priority schools will complete a final application for funding. Emphasis in the application will be on the budget and assurances under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and provisions under Virginia's *ESEA Flexibility Waiver*. Assurances include, but are not limited to:

The school division must assure that it:

1. Ensures schools receiving funds implement one of the four USED models or USED turnaround principles;
2. Uses its funds to implement fully and effectively an intervention in each school that the LEA commits to serve consistent with the final requirements;
3. If implementing a restart model, selects an LTP from the state contract and agrees to hold the LTP accountable for complying with the selected model;
4. Uses *Indistar*®, an online school improvement tool;
5. Establishes annual goals for student achievement on the state's assessments in both reading/language arts and mathematics;
6. Collects meeting minutes, professional development activities, strategies for extending learning opportunities, and parent activities as well as indicators of effective leadership and instructional practice;
7. Sets leading and lagging indicators, including monitoring leading indicators quarterly and lagging indicators annually;
8. Completes an analysis of data points for quarterly reports to ensure strategic, data-driven decisions are made to deploy needed interventions for students who are not meeting expected growth measures and/or who are at risk of failure and dropping out of school;
9. Ensures 40 percent of a teacher's evaluation and principal's evaluation will be based on multiple measures of student academic progress; when data are available and appropriate, teacher performance evaluations incorporate student growth percentiles (SGPs) as one measure of student academic progress;
10. Uses an electronic query system to provide principals with quarterly data needed to make data-driven decisions at the school-level (see Web site: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/dashboard/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/dashboard/index.shtml));
11. Uses an adaptive reading assessment program approved by the VDOE to determine student growth at least quarterly for any student who has failed the Standard of Learning (SOL) assessment in the previous year, a student with a disability, or an English language learner (ELL);
12. Uses the *Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test* (ARDT) for all schools with grade 5 or higher for all students who have failed the SOL assessment in the previous year, a student with a disability, or an ELL (fall, mid-year, and spring at minimum).

13. Attends OSI technical assistance sessions provided for school principals, division staff, and LTPs;
14. Collaborates with assigned VDOE contractor to ensure the LTP, division, and school maintain the fidelity of implementation necessary for reform;
15. Provides an annual structured report to a panel of VDOE staff and turnaround leaders detailing the current action plan, current leading and lagging indicators, and a plan for modifications to be made to ensure the reform is successful; and
16. Reports to the state the school-level data required under the final requirements of this grant.

### **Summary of Division and School Priority Requirements**

Priority school requirements include, but are not limited to, those summarized by the division and school in the chart below.

	Division	School
<b>Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select an intervention model and external lead partner and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the LTP through a rigorous review</li> <li>• Ensure that the school receiving funds implements one of the four USED models or USED turnaround principles</li> <li>• Collaborate with a VDOE contractor to ensure the school's reform is implemented with fidelity</li> <li>• Convene a monthly, at minimum, division leadership team meeting including representatives of: Title I, instruction, special education, ELLs, principals of each priority school, LTP</li> <li>• Ensure development, implementation and monitoring of a school improvement plan (SIP) that is aligned with the needs of each priority school</li> <li>• Collect meeting minutes, professional development activities, strategies for extending learning opportunities, and parent activities as well as indicators of effective leadership and instructional practice;</li> <li>• Identify a division-level representative to serve on the priority school's improvement team and participate in OSI training sessions with the school</li> <li>• Support modification of the school's improvement plan based on quarterly data analysis</li> <li>• Base 40 percent of a principal's evaluation on multiple measures of student academic progress</li> <li>• Support school's annual structured report to a VDOE-identified panel detailing the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a monthly, at minimum, school leadership team meeting, including a member of the division leadership team</li> <li>• Develop, implement, and monitor a SIP that is aligned with identified needs</li> <li>• Establish and monitor leading and lagging indicators</li> <li>• Utilize a VDOE-approved adaptive reading assessment program to determine student growth at least quarterly</li> <li>• Utilize the ARDT provided by the VDOE <i>(required only for priority schools with grade 5 or higher)</i></li> <li>• Develop an intervention strategy for all students who have failed an SOL assessment or failed to meet the fall Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) benchmarks</li> <li>• Submit a quarterly report based on analysis of required points, at a minimum, that evidences strategic, data-driven decisions, and implementation of the needed interventions for identified students</li> <li>• Ensure school improvement plan indicators are updated with tasks that reflect the action steps driven by data, including the required Priority School Quarterly Data Analysis Report</li> <li>• Use the Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) if the priority school is a high school not meeting the FGI rate</li> <li>• Base 40 percent of a teacher's evaluation on multiple measures of student academic progress</li> <li>• Present an annual structured report on details of planned modifications to the</li> </ul>

	division's support of the school's planned modifications to the school's improvement plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in an annual monitoring visit by OSI staff</li> <li>• Report division-level data to VDOE as required</li> <li>• Participate in an annual monitoring visit, if selected</li> </ul>	school's improvement plan based on preliminary SOL results and other data points to a VDOE-identified panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report required school-level data to VDOE as required</li> <li>• Participate in an annual monitoring visit, if selected</li> </ul>
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### **Memorandum of Understanding**

Each division with a priority school must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the LTP prior to any reimbursement for funding under an approved application. The MOU provides details of what is expected of the LTP, the division and school leadership. This document serves as additional accountability for both the school and LTP. Guidance on development of the MOU between a division and LTP is available at the following Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

There are 25 requirements of LTPs as outlined below.

<b>No.</b>	<b>LTP Request for Proposal (RFP) Requirements</b>
<b>1</b>	Provide formative and ongoing reports on program effectiveness to include, but not limited to, student attendance and student discipline.
<b>2</b>	Implement a USED model that employs research-based strategies that provide an immediate and dramatic turnaround in student achievement.
<b>3</b>	Work with the school division to recruit and recommend teachers and a leader(s) who has a proven record of success of increasing student achievement.
<b>4</b>	Recommend necessary restructuring of teacher and leader contracts.
<b>5</b>	Develop and engage teachers and the leader in professional development aligned to programmatic goals.
<b>6</b>	Promote student motivation for learning.
<b>7</b>	Secure parental commitment and involvement through school choice.
<b>8</b>	Promote parental capacity to support student engagement, motivation, and learning within school, at home and in the community.
<b>9</b>	Work with the school division to expand community support to garner human resources needed for reform.
<b>10</b>	Evaluate teacher and leader performance and outcomes and make staffing recommendations accordingly.
<b>11</b>	Develop constructive relationships with existing school personnel.
<b>12</b>	Recommend changes to the school calendar according to student and program needs, for example, year-round schools or extending the length of the school day.
<b>13</b>	Require commitment from parents to allow for additional time for instruction (such as after-school support).
<b>14</b>	Work with the school division to obtain a commitment from teachers to allow for additional time for instruction and professional development.

<b>15</b>	Provide comprehensive, coherent, manageable and integrated instructional support programs.
<b>16</b>	Recommend which existing programs are to be continued and which programs are to be eliminated.
<b>17</b>	Consistent with the state Standards of Learning recommend alignment of curriculum, instruction, classroom formative assessment and sustained professional development to build rigor, foster student-teacher relationships, and provide relevant instruction that engages and motivates students.
<b>18</b>	Organize programming to engage students' sense of adventure, camaraderie, and competition.
<b>19</b>	Develop and implement evidence-based discipline programs that minimize time out of school and/or class.
<b>20</b>	Identify and recommend supporting partners to address social, emotional and behavioral issues (e.g., over-age students).
<b>21</b>	Identify and obtain adequate materials from school system resources (such as the Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Assessment (ARDT) or benchmark assessments).
<b>22</b>	Identify and recommend outside resources needed in the reform effort.
<b>23</b>	Develop and recommend a budget to the school board based on available per pupil amounts of local, basic Standards of Quality (SOQ), school improvement, appropriate Title monies, and special education funding in addition to other sources identified and aligned specifically for the turnaround zone.
<b>24</b>	Work with the school division to seek outside funding from the greater community (business, private foundations, federal and state sources) to support the reform effort.
<b>25</b>	Integrate all academic and support services.

**Note: Through the RFP process, the state contracted vendors must meet all 25 USED LTP requirements.**





## **Section 4:**

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Overview

Building state, school division and school capacity for low-performing schools is premised on the intentional engagement of stakeholders to direct improvement efforts. At the school level a coordinated effort is also evident. The school principal assumes the role of the Change Leader in the school. The External Lead Partner (ELP) is responsible for providing guidance, timelines, resources and support for the implementation of improvement efforts. The state monitors the implementation of the turnaround through a VDOE-assigned contractor. Some divisions may chose to support an Internal Lead Partner (ILP) who communicates about process and changes directly with the superintendent and school board. The ILP may be granted some authority by the superintendent to ensure timely decisions are made. In many cases, especially in small school divisions, there is rarely a need for the ILP. The integrated roles and responsibilities are further detailed in Figure 2.

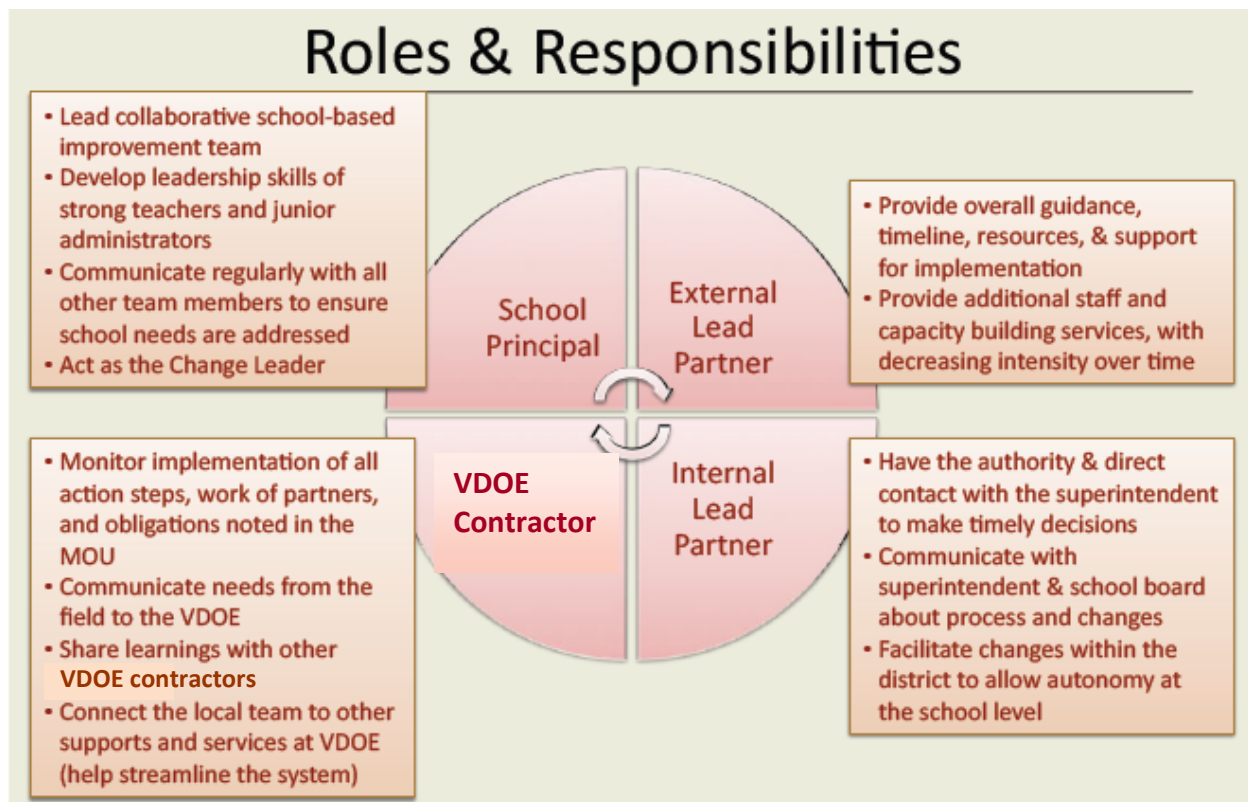


Figure 2

## External Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) Role

### LTP Responsibilities

The main purpose of the LTPs assigned to low-performing schools is to increase student achievement and the graduation rate. For priority schools, LTP responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- building local capacity with targeted and differentiated supports and interventions as determined by diagnostic reviews of student performance and practices;
- bringing increased resources to the schools and students in low-performing schools (includes increased human capital (people), time, money and programs);
- providing deep, systemic instructional reform for the school division and its affected priority school(s); and
- coordinating and delivering practices with quality and accountability.

## Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Role

### Technical Assistance

The VDOE will continue to provide ongoing technical assistance to the LTP, division and school staff. In most cases, the transformation work requires different skill sets and resources than those used in past improvement efforts. The LTPs have managed or have been strongly involved in the management of school improvement efforts in the past, but the prescriptive requirements of the USED models require changes, some significant, to the LTP models. The OSI will hold a series of at least five group technical assistance sessions for the school principals, division staff, and LTPs to ensure implementation meets all requirements of the selected model. These sessions will present a variety of ideas and questions that are part of the turnaround work throughout the year. For example, what types of data need to be collected to inform staff decisions regarding continuing or discontinuing a particular instructional program? Also, the meetings will provide an opportunity for teams to share their promising practices and lessons learned.

Sessions will also support priority schools in development and monitoring of school-level improvement plans, review procedures, provide differentiated technical assistance, and offer networking opportunities. Prior to each meeting date, a registration link and other pertinent information will be forwarded to all participants. Training details are included in the *Office of School Improvement Checklist for Priority Schools* for each cohort (Appendix A). An overview of training for each cohort for the 2013-2014 academic year is provided below.

**Cohort I, II and III (non-VFEL)**, (priority schools identified based on 2010, 2011 and 2012 data, respectively) will participate in a series of five training sessions focused on school improvement requirements, processes and capacity building for sustainability. An optional roundtable session established for sharing of best practices is scheduled for April 2014. The sessions will be led by OSI staff and contracted consultants identified by a needs survey in September 2013. The most current details of activities required for this group of schools is located in Appendix A and available on the OSI Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

**Cohort III Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL)** priority schools identified based on 2012 data and implementing the VFEL model will participate in a series of five training sessions led by the VFEL staff. An optional roundtable session established for sharing of best practices is scheduled for April 2014. The most current details of activities required for this group of schools is located in Appendix A and available on the OSI Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

**Cohort IV**, newly identified priority schools identified based on 2013 data, will participate in a series of trainings related to background research and information about selected strands of the improvement model. Training sessions will be led by an external education reform consultant (Corbett Education Consulting, LLC) and OSI staff. Sessions will cover information on the requirements and timeline for implementation of the selected reform model. They will also facilitate sharing of promising practices regarding compliance and implementation efforts. Using the strands from the Center on Innovation and Improvement's *Transformation Toolkit*, OSI will provide five technical assistance sessions as follows: 1) Priority School Overview and requirements; 2) Strands A, D & F: Establishing and Orienting the District Transformation Team, Working with Stakeholders and Building Support for Transformation and Establishing and Orienting the School Transformation Team; 3) Strand B and E: Moving Toward School Autonomy and Contracting with External Providers; 4) Strand I, J, K and Interventions: Providing Rigorous Staff Development, Increasing Learning Time, Reforming Instruction and Interventions (TA01, TA02, TA03), and; 5) strand C, G and H: Selecting a Principal and Recruiting Teachers, Leading Change (Especially for Principals) and Evaluation, Rewarding, and Removing Staff.

More information on these strands and the Transformation Toolkit is available at the following Web site: [http://www.centerii.org/resources/Transformation\\_Toolkit-0409.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/resources/Transformation_Toolkit-0409.pdf). The most current details of activities required for this group of schools is located in Appendix A and available on the OSI Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/priority\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/priority_schools/index.shtml)

The primary focus of this work will be to observe, consult, and provide technical assistance to Virginia school divisions implementing the USED transformation and restart models, ensuring compliance with all school improvement grant requirements of Section 1003(g) of the ESEA, and the *ESEA Flexibility Waiver*. Corbett Education Consulting, LLC has extensive experience with school improvement, the federal SIG models, policy and practices related to comprehensive school reform, and working with the various entities involved in school improvement.

The technical assistance schedule for 2013-2014 for priority schools is detailed by cohort in the *Office of School Improvement Checklist for Priority Schools* found in Appendix A.

## **Monitoring**

Virginia uses a variety of methods to monitor turnaround efforts. The OSI staff monitors the division, LTP, school and state contractor through meeting minutes, the periodic review of school improvement plans, contractor monthly reports and required reports submitted through Indistar®. The division's support for the school's improvement efforts is required to be documented in the school's plan, as there is not a separate division-level plan for priority schools.

*Indistar*® will be used by priority schools. All schools and will use the Transformation Tool Kit (from the Center on Innovation and Improvement based on the requirements of the transformation model), except for returning Cohort I schools who began with the 25 indicators in the state contract for a LTP. VDOE-assigned contractors and OSI staff monitor the implementation efforts evidenced in the school's improvement plan, meeting minutes and reports in *Indistar*® monthly. Contractors submit monthly reports that are forwarded to the superintendent and the contractor by OSI after review. Monitoring visits are conducted annually by OSI staff. If needed, OSI will intervene and facilitate discussions for required changes to the MOU between the LTP and the local school board, if needed. As an example, in the administration of the SIG grants, Virginia has requested amendments to the MOU when the LTP was not able to bring about the changes needed to implement the reform strategies (either due to the division or LTP). An example of an addendum between a LTP and a school division is available upon request from the Office of School Improvement.

As a requirement for continued funding for priority schools, teams comprised of division-level representatives, the school principal and the LTP will be required to present their applications each summer to a panel of VDOE staff and turnaround specialists. This provides teams with an opportunity to reflect on the past year's accomplishments, as well identify barriers to the reform effort and planned actions for the coming year. Also, each division and a chosen school will participate in an OSI on-site monitoring. In addition to a review of documents and reports, OSI monitoring will include division-level, school-level, teacher, student and parent interviews to identify areas of commendation and recommendation. These results will be communicated with the division.

Recommendations from monitoring reports, visits and/or the panel must be addressed prior to approval of future reimbursements or funding awards.

### **VDOE Contractor**

A VDOE-trained contractor, or OSI staff member, will be assigned to each school to monitor the implementation of the school's reform program and report monthly to OSI. Contractors will attend all cohort technical assistance sessions with the LTP and school/division representatives. The state contractor will monitor the coordination and collaboration of efforts of all stakeholders, including the division's support of improvement strategies in the priority school. Monitoring by state contractors may include onsite visits, attendance at division- and school-level meetings onsite or via teleconference calls, review of meeting minutes, and review of the school's improvement plan. This effort ensures that the LTP, division, and school maintain the fidelity of implementation necessary for the reform.

The VDOE-assigned contractor's role includes, but is not limited to:

- Supporting the division's capacity to assist low-performing schools and increase student achievement;
- Monitoring division- and school-level planning for sustainability of improvement efforts, and;
- Detailed reporting on the implementation of the chosen model in regards to school improvement strategies, collaborative efforts, the school's data analysis process, interventions, barriers to implementation, and review of progress on leading indicators.

The *Priority School VDOE Contractor Monthly Report Form* is found in Appendix I. More detailed information on the state contractor reporting responsibilities for priority schools is found in Section 6: State Contractor Reporting Requirements.

In 2013-2014, the division's VDOE-assigned contractor will also be responsible for support of the division's schools in other sanctions (i.e., focus, warned academically or provisionally accredited graduation rate, AMO).

Descriptions of the VDOE-assigned contractor's roles:

- **Priority Schools:** Contractor monitors the implementation of the turnaround model and support efforts from the LTP, division and school. Contractors attend scheduled VDOE trainings for the cohort group(s) of schools they are assigned to.
- **Focus Schools:** Contractor will work to support focus school(s) in development of interventions for students who are at risk of not passing a state assessment in reading or mathematics including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- **Warned Schools:** Contractors will support the LEA in conducting a curriculum audit of schools that are rated *Accredited with Warning*.
- **AMO Schools:** Contractor will support the division in adhering to the requirements for the division to provide quarterly oversight of and comments on the school's plan.

**Lead Turnaround Partners (LTPs), divisions, schools and state contractors should be aware of all supports being provided in the division for each specific school. This will ensure support efforts are not duplicated, but are efficient and effective. In all cases, the LTP (or VDOE in certain cases) determines whether resources are needed.**



## **Section 5:**

# **Priority School Reporting Requirements**

## Priority School Reporting

### Overview

Virginia emphasizes the participation and continuous involvement of stakeholders in the school improvement process as well as targeted interventions at the school level for students at risk for not passing a grade-level assessment, including students with disabilities and ELL students. The OSI must ensure fidelity of school improvement efforts, compliance with ESEA requirements and ensure USED reporting requirements are fulfilled. This is accomplished through the monitoring of the following: division and school collaboration with the LTP; school-level implementation of targeted interventions for students at risk; and USED reporting requirements. In addition to ensuring compliance, monitoring also drives OSI planning and technical assistance.

The USED requires schools to complete the following required reports:

- *Priority School Interventions Annual Report*,
- *Priority School Leading Indicator Annual Report*, and
- *Priority School Lagging Indicator Annual Report*.

In addition, schools will complete the *Priority School Quarterly Data Analysis Report*.

The OSI requires the school to provide evidence of implementation for the following:

- An adaptive reading program (quarterly use with students who failed a SOL assessment in the previous year, students with disabilities, and ELL as appropriate, at minimum);
- *Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test* (ARDT), required for grade 5 and above (fall, midyear and spring use with students who failed the mathematics SOL assessment in the previous year, students with disabilities, and ELL as appropriate, at minimum);
- An electronic data query system with the minimum required data points

In addition, schools will complete the following reports on the *In the Priority School Quarterly Report*.

State contractors complete the *Priority School VDOE Contractor Monthly Report*. State contractors and OSI staff will review required reports, intervene and facilitate discussions as needed between the division, school, and LTP.

## Reporting Tools and Required Reports

### Indistar®

*Indistar®* is a Web-based tool for **assessing, planning, implementing, and monitoring** progress through the Transformation Tool Kit (from the Center on Innovation and Improvement based on the requirements of the transformational model, including the 25 Lead Turnaround Principles). As stated in the *ESEA Flexibility Waiver*, priority schools will be **required** to use *Indistar®*. In addition to providing a tool for school improvement planning and documentation of division- and school-level meeting minutes, *Indistar®* also provides the tools for submission of required USED and OSI reports. The state contractors will monitor division- and school-level assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting through *Indistar®*.

### Adaptive Reading Program



If a priority school does not have an adaptive reading assessment program to determine student growth at least quarterly, one approved by the VDOE will be required for students who failed the SOL assessment in the previous year, with a particular focus on underperforming subgroups. The selected online computer adaptive testing (CAT) system should administer assessments to determine each student's overall reading ability. The system must be able to adjust the difficulty of questions based on performance, and track the performance of individual students, classrooms, and the school over time. Students should be grouped by tiers for intervention based on the assessment results. Although flexibility will be given in the division's choice of assessments, VDOE may recommend a different assessment should the data collected not be useful in changing and differentiating instruction. The assigned state contractor will monitor the LEA's implementation of this requirement on a quarterly basis. To obtain approval regarding the selected adaptive reading assessment program, the priority school principal should submit the *Adaptive Reading Assessment Program Approval Form* via the *Indistar®* Dashboard no later than October 11, 2013. A copy of the form may be found in Appendix C.

### **Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT)**

All priority schools with grade 5 or higher will be required to use the *Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test* (ARDT) provided by VDOE at minimum three times per year (fall, mid-year, spring). This Web-based application employs a computer adaptive testing engine to help determine student proficiency in mathematics. It will be **required** for students who failed the SOL assessment in the previous year, students with disabilities, and ELL as appropriate. The application draws from a pool of over 2,000 test items in real time. The test items are correlated to the new Mathematics Standards of Learning for grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and Algebra I and were reviewed by a group of Virginia educators for accuracy and validity. In addition, technology enhanced items have been added to the ARDT. Results from the diagnostic test are available immediately and provide information correlated to the SOL reporting categories. This information provides data to develop and focus on interventions for those students who are most at risk. Additional information regarding the ARDT may be found at [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/mathematics/middle/algebra\\_readiness/diagnostic\\_test/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/mathematics/middle/algebra_readiness/diagnostic_test/index.shtml).

### **Data System Approval Form**

School teams in priority schools will be **required** to complete the *Priority Schools Quarterly Report* each quarter to evidence how strategic, data-driven decisions inform the implementation of needed interventions for students who are: 1) not meeting expected growth measures; 2) at risk of failure; or 3) at risk of dropping out of school. In order to help divisions lacking the resources and capacity to implement an electronic query system for required data points, Virginia secured *DataCation* by CaseNEX under an RFP. This electronic query system, the *Virginia Dashboard*, provides principals with data needed to make data-driven decisions at the school level. In addition, the tool allows schools to monitor interventions throughout the year to determine the effectiveness for each student. The school's electronic query system must be capable of generating monthly reports, by intervention type, based upon the following **required** school-level data points, at a minimum:

- Student attendance
- Teacher attendance
- Benchmark results
- Reading and mathematics grades
- Student discipline reports
- Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) data (fall and spring)

- World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) data for ELL students
- Student transfer data
- Student Intervention participation by intervention type

Analysis of the required data points, at a minimum, will be used by school teams each quarter, and if needed, monthly, to update the school improvement plan and intervention process. Keep in mind that requests to use electronic data query systems in place of the *Virginia Dashboard* will not be honored unless the system has the capacity to sort data by intervention and allows data to be reviewed by the principal quickly. The process of quarterly data-driven strategic decision-making will be monitored by state contractors. More information on the monitoring process is found in this section under the headings: Protocol for Reviewing Quarterly Data with School- and Division-level Teams and The Intervention Process.

To obtain approval regarding the electronic data query system, the priority school principal should submit the *Data System Approval Form* via the *Indistar®* Dashboard no later than November 7, 2012. A copy of the form may be found in Appendix D. More information on the Virginia Dashboard is available at the following Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/dashboard/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/dashboard/index.shtml).

### **Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) for High Schools**

Any priority high school not meeting the FGI rate will be **required** to use VEWS. The VEWS indicators are based upon predictors of drop out and graduation that have been validated by national research and by four Virginia school divisions that participated in a pilot program. The VEWS data provide quarterly reports to the school team to track progress on selected indicators. Guided by the systematic review of the VEWS data and the division's and school's self-assessment report, the contractor will identify and communicate to the Office of School Improvement the technical assistance needs for each school and division. More information on VEWS can be found at the following Web site:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/early\\_warning\\_system/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/early_warning_system/index.shtml).

### **Priority School USED Interventions Annual Report**

Once the turnaround implementation begins, and annually thereafter, each school is **required** to describe the implementation of federally-required interventions as documented by indicators in the school's improvement plan. Principals will identify the indicator and tasks described in the school improvement plan that support the description of each requirement. The report includes descriptions of the following required federal interventions:

- Principal's capacity to lead reform efforts
- Rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation system for teachers and principals
- Identification of and reward for school leaders, teachers, and other staff, who have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates; identification and removal of those who, after provision of ample opportunities to improve professional practices, have not done so
- Ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development aligned to school reform efforts
- Strategies related to recruitment, placement and retention of quality staff
- Implementation of an aligned instructional program
- Continuous use of student data (formative, interim and summative) to inform and differentiate instruction

- Schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time
- Ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement
- School-level operational flexibility (staffing, calendars/time, budget planning)
- Ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, SEA or external lead partner

All priority school principals should submit the *Priority School USED Intervention Annual Report* via the *Indistar*® Dashboard no later than November 7, 2012. Newly identified priority schools will not have a school improvement plan and will not include indicators and tasks for the November submission. These schools should describe proposed interventions in the initial plan section for each requirement. Continuing cohorts should complete the appropriate year's progress information. A copy of the form may be found in Appendix E.

### **Priority School USED Leading Indicator Annual Report**

In each year of the reform, schools will set leading and lagging indicators as required by USED. Leading indicators will be reviewed quarterly to ensure that the actions undertaken as part of the reform will lead to expected outcomes (lagging indicators). These indicators will be posted on *Indistar*® and be used to evaluate the progress of the school and LTP. Examples of leading indicators include:

- Number of minutes within the school day
- Student performance on formative assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics, by student subgroup
- Dropout rate for the quarter
- Student attendance rate for the quarter
- Number, percentage and grades of students enrolled and completing advanced coursework (e.g., AP/IB), early-college high schools, or dual enrollment classes each quarter
- Truancy rate (total of student truant days per quarter and then annually)
- Distribution of teachers by performance level on LEA's teacher evaluation system (number of teachers rated: Exemplary, Proficient, Developing/Needs Improvement, and Unacceptable)
- Teacher attendance rate (Total of all teachers' days in attendance / Total school days x FTE Teachers)

All priority school principals should submit the *Priority School USED Leading Indicator Annual Report* via the *Indistar*® Dashboard no later than November 7, 2012. Newly identified priority schools should complete the Goal and 'Pre' data sections. Continuing cohorts should complete the appropriate actual information and indicate whether the benchmark was met. A copy of the form may be found in Appendix F.

### **Priority School USED Lagging Indicator Report**

In each year of the reform, schools will also set lagging indicators as required by USED. Lagging indicators will be reviewed annually to ensure that the actions undertaken as part of the reform lead to expected outcomes. These indicators will be posted on *Indistar*® and will be used to evaluate the progress of the school and LTP. Examples of lagging indicators include:

- Accreditation status and increase in student achievement

- Priority status change in ranking
- Percentage of students at or above each AMO proficiency level on state assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics (e.g., Basic, Proficient, Advanced), by grade and by student subgroup and gap group ('All Students', Gap Group 1, Gap Group 2, Gap Group 3, Students with Disabilities, Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White and Asian)
- Average scale scores on state assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics, by grade, for the all students group, for each achievement quartile, and for each subgroup ('All Students', Gap Group 1, Students with Disabilities, LEP Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White and Asian)
- Percentage of limited English proficient students who attain English language proficiency
- Graduation rate
- College enrollment rates

All priority school principals should submit the *Priority School USED Lagging Indicator Annual Report* via the *Indistar*® Dashboard no later than November 7, 2012. Newly identified priority schools should complete the Goal and 'Pre' data sections. Continuing cohorts should complete the appropriate actual information and indicate whether the benchmark was met. A copy of the form may be found in Appendix G.

### **Priority School Quarterly Data Analysis Report**

Analysis of the data points from the quarterly reporting system will be used by the school improvement team each quarter, and if needed, monthly. Responses to the following prompts will be posted on *Indistar*®:

- Based upon analysis of all minimal required data points, and any additional data points the school has identified, which indicators or tasks will be added to your *Indistar*® online plan? Identify the indicator and describe the newly assigned associated tasks.
- What is the progress of your students needing intervention? Describe how the intervention process (identification of problem, data analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, modification) has been modified based on data analysis for this quarter. What specific tiered interventions are being continued, discontinued, or implemented as a result of your data analysis?
- Describe the school's process for continued monitoring of present, as well as recently added, interventions.

In addition the school team will ensure the leading indicators, described in the *Priority School USED Leading Indicator Annual Report*, are reviewed for progress each quarter. The *Priority School Quarterly Data Analysis Report* is found in Appendix F.

### **Protocol for Reviewing Quarterly Data with School- and Division-level Teams**

The use of data to support a school improvement plan should be an intentional and seamless process with the purpose of evaluating the efficacy of strategies implemented during a given marking period. At the conclusion of each marking period, school- and division-level teams will review a variety of data points, and use the information to evaluate the efficacy of the improvement plans and progress of

planned interventions. The following protocol should be helpful to school- and division-level teams, as well as state contractors, as school and/or division leadership teams meet regarding the quarterly review of data.

**Step 1: At the end of each marking period, priority schools use their VDOE-approved electronic query system to evaluate progress of planned interventions and the intervention process by completing a quarterly report based on analysis of required data points, at a minimum:**

- Student attendance
- Teacher attendance
- Benchmark results
- Reading and mathematics grades
- Student discipline reports
- Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) data (fall and spring)
- World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) data for ELL students
- Student transfer data
- Student Intervention participation by intervention type

**Step 2: The division leadership team meets with the building principal to discuss the quarterly data.**

- The following agenda items **must** be included as a part of the discussion:
  - Review of **individual data points** and **comparison of data points** (i.e., student grades and benchmark results)
  - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who have previously failed or are **at risk of failing a reading and/or mathematics SOL**;
  - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who have been identified for **PALS intervention (K-3)**, if applicable;
  - Review of strategies and data analysis for ELL students, if applicable;
  - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **below grade level in reading or mathematics based on a disability** (considering least restrictive environment);
  - Review of school's Indistar® improvement plan; and
  - Updates needed to the school's Indistar® improvement plans
- Minutes from this meeting, including the aforementioned agenda items, are required to be entered onto the Indistar® Web site. The meeting minutes should include **decisions** made as a result of discussions regarding the quarterly data.
- The school improvement plan should be revised, as needed, based on discussions about the identified needs.

The detailed process of documenting quarterly data review in Indistar® is found under Section 7: Indistar® Improvement Planning and Quarterly Reporting.

## **The Intervention Process**

Based on the analysis of data points, the school is required to make strategic, data-driven decisions to implement needed interventions for identified students including students with disabilities and English language learners. School improvement teams will analyze data points quarterly or monthly as needed. School improvement plans will be updated with tasks that address emerging needs of the priority school. Division-level teams will meet quarterly, at a minimum, with principals and LTP to review the

results of the data analysis on interventions and data points to ensure school-level next steps are aligned with needs and implementation is supported by the division and/or LTP (i.e., human and fiscal resources). See *The Intervention Process Model* that follows:

### The Intervention Process Model

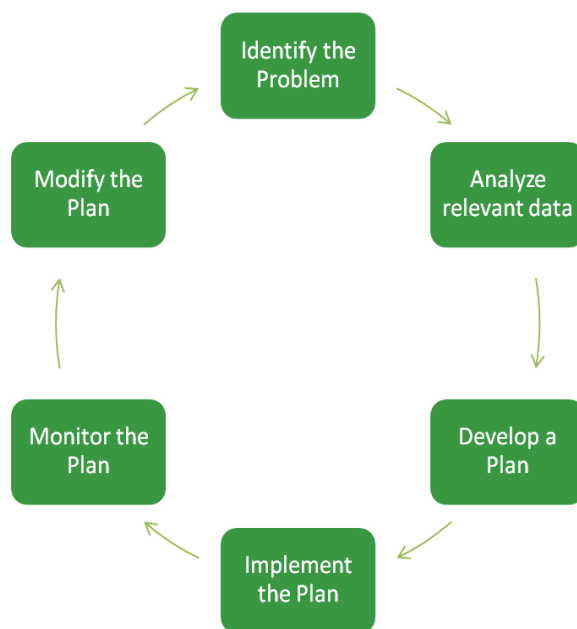


Figure 3

Priority schools must develop an intervention strategy for all students who have failed an SOL assessment in the past year, are identified as below grade level on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (K-3), are at risk of failing an SOL assessment, are students with disabilities, or ELLs. The description of the intervention for each group should include the following elements:

- a. targeted group;
- b. intervention description (i.e., least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities or ELLs is considered an intervention);
- c. intervention provider;
- d. frequency and amount of time for each tier; and,
- e. description of how the intervention will be monitored.

**Example:** Tier 2 Grade 1 Reading: Students who scored just above (15 percent) the PALS benchmark for grade 1 (**targeted group**) will receive an additional guided reading session (**intervention description**) by the classroom teacher (**intervention provider**) for 20 minutes three times per week (**frequency and amount of time**) and small group pull-out support 30 minutes two times per week (**frequency and time**) with the reading specialist (**intervention provider**) focusing on teacher-identified skill deficiencies with PALS materials (i.e., blends, r-controlled vowels, fluency, comprehension) (**intervention description**). First grade teachers will report data on common formative assessments collected during guided reading sessions and data on assessments conducted by the reading specialist every two weeks (**monitoring**) in

grade-level meetings to determine next steps (revisiting program design, identification process, materials, exit criteria, etc.).

### **45-Day Pre-SOL Plans (Optional)**

The **45-Day Standards of Learning (SOL) Instructional Plan** provides schools with a clear plan of action for the time from the end of the third marking period until the beginning of the SOL testing period. The purpose of the plan is to indicate the strategies that will be implemented during the 45-day period preceding SOL testing to:

- Ensure that the SOL blueprints are used to direct the planning of instruction for SOL objectives that require re-teaching or have not been taught.
- Ensure that the SOL blueprints are used to direct remediation efforts for students who have not mastered SOL objectives.
- Emphasize that all personnel in the building must ensure that "all hands are on deck" to support increased student achievement.

The plan should be **no more than three pages** in length, and be developed with input from instructional personnel. Each principal may opt to develop a format to meet the needs of his/her school. In addition, the principal should review the plan with all teachers in the building prior to spring break so that implementation may begin no later than the first day that students return to school after spring break.

The *45-Day Pre-SOL Plan* is **optional** for priority schools unless the state contractor or LTP makes it a requirement. A sample template may be found in Appendix H.



## **Section 6:**

# **Improvement Planning**

## **with Indistar®**



## Indistar® Web-based Planning Tool

Indistar® is a Web-based planning tool that guides a division and school team in charting its improvement and managing the continuous improvement process. Indistar® is premised on the firm belief that division and school improvement is best accomplished when directed by the people closest to the students. While the state provides the framework for the process, each school and division team applies its own ingenuity to achieve the results it desires for its students.

The LTP, under contract with the local school board, leads the reform effort within the turnaround zone by bringing increased resources and support for deep, systemic instructional reform. The state is responsible for supporting the school division and LTP. A well-coordinated reform effort delivered with quality and accountability develops capacity in the division and school for sustained improvement. The transformation process requires a “culture of candor” in which LTP, division and school personnel talk openly and honestly about the priority school’s professional practices that contribute to student learning. State support includes, but is not limited to, ensuring the school and division teams are given convenient access to tools and resources to get the job done. Indistar® provides the school and division a tool to document the reform efforts. In addition, Indistar® serves as a monitoring tool for the state, indicating where additional support may be needed for the LTP, division or school.

Indistar® includes *Wise Ways* research briefs to support its indicators of effective practice. Also, Indistar® provides *Indicators in Action* video modules demonstrating effective practices, and providing the technology for capacity builders to coach the teams in real time. Indistar® enables contractors to assist school teams using coaching comments about each team’s ongoing work.

The Indistar® Web-based tool assists school- and division-level teams with **assessing, planning, implementing, and monitoring** progress toward accomplishing goals established with the LTP.

The six-step process includes:

- **Step 1: Register school/division**  
A division contact person who also serves as a member of the leadership team will register both the school and division on the Indistar® Web site at [www.indistar.org](http://www.indistar.org). Process managers must be appointed by school- and division-level teams to guide their work within the tool such as entering data, meeting minutes and other information.
- **Step 2: Provide school information**  
Data-driven decision making is an essential component of improvement planning. Step 2 of the process requires the school-level team to enter aggregate information regarding student ethnicity, attendance, mobility, and disability for the priority school. In addition, teams may enter formative and summative data throughout the duration of the plan related to their needs and action steps.
- **Step 3: Form school/division team**

Improvement planning requires the participation of a variety of internal and external stakeholders. To this end, school- and division-level teams will enter information regarding each team member. This information will be used continuously throughout the process to identify parties responsible for specific tasks and to monitor attendance at improvement team meetings.

- **Step 4: Assess school improvement indicators**

Indistar® includes indicators for schools in two tools:

- Transformational Toolkit - a set of indicators based on the Center on Innovation and Improvement's transformation toolkit that address all USED required actions for implementation of the transformational model (for use by Cohort II and III and specific Cohort I schools); and
- 25 Lead Turnaround Principles - a set of indicators based on the RFP for Lead Turnaround Partners (for use by specific Cohort I schools). The indicators will be assessed individually using a rating of *fully, limited, or no implementation*.

- **Step 5: Create school plan**

Based on the indicator assessment results, school-level teams will create an objective and a series of tasks associated with each selected indicator. The tasks will serve as a "road map" for executing the indicators by identifying action steps and a corresponding timeframe for specific stakeholders.

- **Step 6: Monitor school/division plan**

Monitoring is an essential component of improvement planning as it allows teams to evaluate the efficacy of tasks that were developed. The continuous improvement process enables teams to review their work and make the necessary adjustments to the plan throughout the school year. In addition, data points will be used to determine the effectiveness of interventions and serve as a basis for modification of tasks (strategies) or the addition of new initiatives.

More information regarding the Web-based planning tool may be found at [www.indistar.org](http://www.indistar.org).

The development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement plans involve a laser-like focus on the nexus between strategies and data. To this end, priority schools and their respective divisions will review data on a consistent basis with the LTP to determine the effectiveness of strategies embedded within their plans. The Indistar® Web-based planning tool, in combination with quarterly review of data, will provide teams with *tools* to affect change at both the school and division level. The following questions, developed by Edie Holcomb, represent the phases or stages of the school improvement process, and will serve as the foundation of the process:

1. ***Where are we now?*** What caused your school to be identified as a priority school?
2. ***Where do we want to go?*** How will it look when the indicator is met?
3. ***How will we get there?*** What strategies (tasks) will be developed to support the selected objectives?
4. ***How will we know we are (getting) there?*** What quarterly data associated with each objective will your team collect and review?
5. ***How will we sustain focus and momentum?*** How will your team use the quarterly data to modify your strategies (tasks)?
- 6.

## Protocol for Monitoring Improvement Plans

The school, division, LTP and state contractor and OSI all play a role in the monitoring of improvement efforts through the school's improvement plan. Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) guidance and directives must be reflected in the plan. The state contractor will be instrumental in ensuring the school and division teams take an active role in ensuring the plan's alignment with the focus of improvement efforts. An aligned school improvement plan will be critical to the process. Throughout the school year, improvement plans should be implemented, monitored, and revised as a result of continuous data analysis. The following protocol will assist the schools, divisions and state contractors as they monitor school improvement plans.

**Step 1: Review the school's improvement plan for alignment of objectives and tasks with the focus of improvement efforts based on the continuation application, recent school- and division-level meeting minutes, LTP school review, etc.**

- The school's indicators must support the focus of data-driven reform efforts. In the example illustrated in Figure 4 on the following page, there is evidence that the school leadership team developed an objective under indicator K5 to support the reform efforts aligned with the focus identified by the LTP on improving mathematics instruction.

Indicator: **K5** [Wise Ways](#)®

**Objective: All teachers will monitor and assess student mastery of standards-based objectives in order to make appropriate curriculum adjustments. (975)**

Indicator selected by the leadership team to address objective of increasing mathematics performance

**STEP 4 - INFORMATION**

Level of Development or Implementation: **Limited Development**

Priority Score: **3**

Opportunity Score: **1**

**Current level description:** Presently, content area teams follow the division's curriculum guide and maintain similar pacing, use individual assessments throughout the quarter and administer the division's quarterly benchmark assessment.

**STEP 5 - INFORMATION**

**Describe how it will look when this objective is being fully met in your School:**

Content area teams will administer common formative assessments aligned with their curriculum guide, using collected data to adjust curriculum alignment and pacing and revise strategies.

Assigned to: **Bob Goodrich**

Objective Target Date: **12/01/2012**

**STEP 6 - MONITOR PLAN**

**Update or Complete Task Status**

1. Update task comments as necessary.
2. Enter "Completed date" (mm/dd/yyyy) when task has been completed.
3. Click "Save/Update" to save changes.

Note: Click "Delete this task" to remove the task from the objective. This should only be done if the task is no longer necessary in working toward meeting the objective.

Comments entered indicating division support of the task

Task: 2 Review data from initial 4.5 weeks formative assessments. Document the changes made in curriculum and instructional practices during the 4.5 weeks driven by the results of formative assessments.

Comments: Content team meeting notes document review of data from formative assessments. Notes regarding curriculum and instructional strategy changes have been incorporated in the revised curriculum guide for the grade level content area. The process will begin again 2 weeks prior to the end of the first 4.5 weeks and will continue throughout the school term. Division will assign mathematics specialist to work with all grade level math teams to replicate process.

Completed date: 10/20/2012

Save / Update

Cancel

Delete this task

**Select Task to Enter Monitoring Information**

	Assigned to	Target Date	Completed
<a href="#">Content area teams will work with the mathematics specialist to develop common formative assessments for the first 4 1/2 weeks based on the current curriculum guide and pacing. Dates for formative assessments will be agreed upon.</a>	Jane Bloomfield	08/24/2012	
<a href="#">Review data from initial 4.5 weeks formative assessments. Document the changes made in curriculum and instructional practices during the 4.5 weeks driven by the results of formative assessments.</a>	Vera Brandt	10/20/2012	10/20/2012

Figure 4

**Step 2: Review the school's improvement plan for evidence of consistent monitoring of the tasks developed for each district improvement indicator.**

- Each comment should include the date, and clearly describe the status of the task. Is it evident from the status comments that the task has been implemented? Is the task/strategy successful? How do you know? In Figure 5, you will see evidence of consistent monitoring of a task by a school leadership team.

Indicator: **K5** *Wise Ways* 8

**Objective: All teachers will monitor and assess student mastery of standards-based objectives in order to make appropriate curriculum adjustments. (975)**

**STEP 4 - INFORMATION**

Level of Development or Implementation: **Limited Development**

Priority Score: **3**

Opportunity Score: **1**

**Current level description:** Presently, content area teams follow the division's curriculum guide and maintain similar pacing, use individual assessments throughout the quarter and administer the division's quarterly benchmark assessment.

**STEP 5 - INFORMATION**

**Describe how it will look when this objective is being fully met in your School:**

Content area teams will administer common formative assessments aligned with their curriculum guide, using collected data to adjust curriculum alignment and pacing and revise strategies.

Assigned to: **Bob Goodrich** Objective Target Date: **12/01/2012**

**STEP 6 - MONITOR PLAN**

**Update or Complete Task Status**

1. Update task comments as necessary.
2. Enter "Completed date" (mm/dd/yyyy) when task has been completed.
3. Click "Save/Update" to save changes.

Note: Click "Delete this task" to remove the task from the objective. This should only be done if the task is no longer necessary in working toward meeting the objective.

Comments entered by the school leadership team regarding the status of the task include dates

Task: 2 Review data from initial 4.5 weeks formative assessments. Document the changes made in curriculum and instructional practices during the 4.5 weeks driven by the results of formative assessments.

Comments: Content team meeting notes document review of data from formative assessments. (10/11/12) Notes regarding curriculum and instructional strategy changes have been incorporated in the revised curriculum guide for the grade level content area (10/20/12). Based on results of initial formative assessments teachers planned time for small groups, focusing on specific deficiency of skills - lesson plans (11/1/12). Strategies addressing measuring perimeter were revised and used for re-teaching.

Completed date: 10/20/2012

Save / Update

Cancel

Delete this task

**Select Task to Enter Monitoring Information**

Initial Focus: Content area teams will work with mathematics specialist to develop common formative assessments for the first 4 1/2 weeks based on the current curriculum guide and pacing. Dates for formative assessments will be agreed upon. Support for other content areas will be established with lead content area attending the second formative assessment review with

Assigned to	Target Date	Completed
Jane Bloomfield	08/24/2012	

Figure 5

**Step 3: Review meeting minutes and agendas posted on the Indistar® Web-based planning tool.**

- School- and division-meeting minutes and agendas should be posted on a monthly basis, and contain information regarding decisions made by the school and division leadership teams.

During meetings with the school leadership team, the contractor may want to consider the following questions:

- a. Do school improvement indicators' objectives and tasks reflect targeted areas for focus schools?
- b. Are tasks appropriate and sufficiently detailed?
- c. Do comments include specific data to indicate progress?
- d. Are comments dated to indicate ongoing monitoring?
- e. Does the school leadership team meet monthly to monitor and update the indicators and tasks?
- f. Are agendas posted prior to each meeting, and include indicators to be discussed?
- g. Are meeting minutes, detailing the discussion and actions taken, posted in a timely manner?
- h. Are tasks updated based on the discussion at the division leadership team meetings? Is quarterly data reviewed with each priority school?
- i. Is the division leadership team member, assigned to each priority school, attending improvement team meetings and sharing the outcomes with the division leadership team?

**The division leadership team is responsible for monitoring improvement plans for each priority school.** Monitoring activities include reviewing indicators, tasks, student performance data and meeting minutes.



## **Section 7:**

## **Glossary**

## Glossary

**Annual measurable objectives (AMO)** - The minimum required percentages of students determined to be proficient in each content area.

**Division contact person** - The person designated by the local educational agency to lead the division leadership support team and collaborate with the VDOE-assigned division liaison.

**Division liaison** - The VDOE contractor assigned to work with a specific division leadership support team and its identified focus schools.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)** - The primary federal law affecting K-12 education. The most recent reauthorization of the law is also known as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver** – A waiver with flexibility regarding specific requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction.

**Focus school** - A Title I school in Virginia that does not meet participation rates and/or has the largest proficiency gaps on statewide assessments in reading and mathematics resulting in it being identified in the lowest 10 percent of Title I schools.

**Fully Accredited** - The accreditation rating earned by a school when students achieve an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade and fifth-grade English, 70 percent in mathematics, and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the adjusted pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas – English, mathematics, history/social science and science.

**Indistar®** - A Web-based planning tool used by focus schools and their division leadership support teams to chart their continuous improvement process.

**Local educational agency (LEA)** - The term used in federal education law to describe a local school division.

**Priority school** – A school identified under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver using the following criteria: a previously served Tier I or Tier II school, a Title I school with a FGI of 60 percent or less for two or more consecutive years, a Title I school with lowest performance in the all student group in reading and/or mathematics on federal AMOs; or a Title I schools failing to meet the 95 percent participation rate in reading and/or mathematics for three consecutive years.

**Quarterly audit report** - A document completed by the division liaison on a quarterly basis to document a local educational agency's compliance with the *ESEA* Flexibility Waiver requirements.



**State education agency (SEA)** - The term referring to the Virginia Board of Education, which is responsible for the general supervision of a state's public elementary and secondary schools.

**School improvement plan** - Strategies and steps that a school will utilize to raise student achievement. A plan may involve new programs, more assistance for students, new curricula and/or teacher training.

**Single Sign-On for Web Systems (SSWS)** - A portal through which school division personnel may access many of the Virginia Department of Education's data collection processes, reports, and applications.

**State contractor** – The VDOE contractor assigned to monitor the fidelity of implementation of the reform model in priority schools.

**Title I** - Federal program designed to help low-income children who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs.

**Virginia Data Dashboard (Datacation)** - The electronic query system that provides principals with data needed to make data-driven decisions at the school level.

